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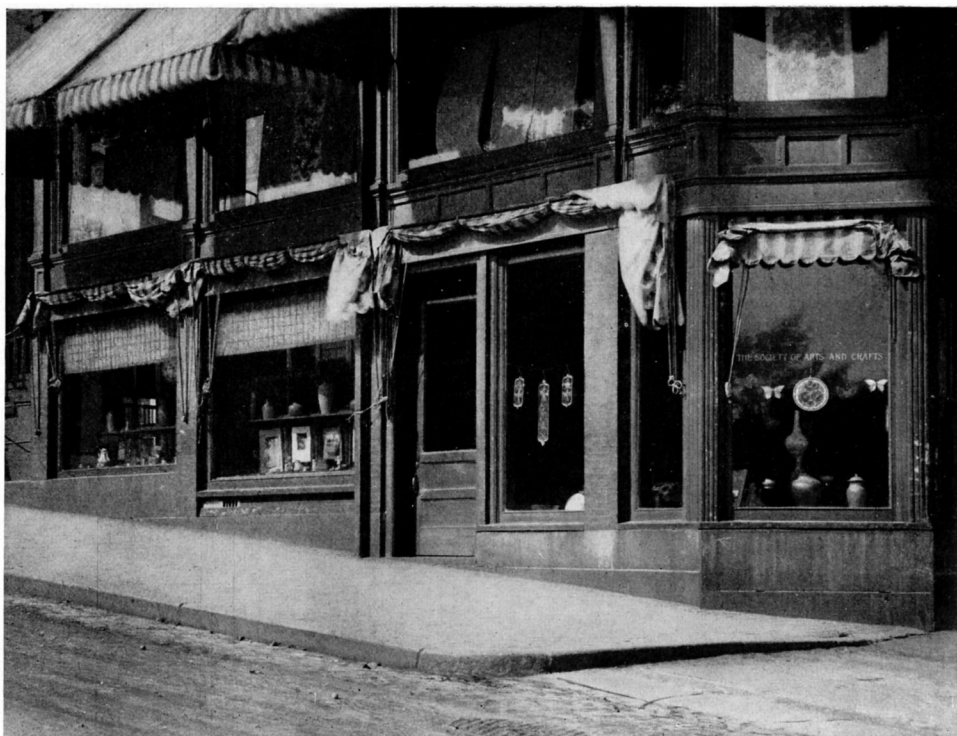
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THE OLD TICHNOR HOUSE. NOW THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE BOSTON SOCIETY OF ARTS AND CRAFTS

AN AMERICAN CITY'S SHOP FRONTS

BY FREDERICK W. COBURN

FEW but not far between are the good-looking shop fronts in Boston. There are just enough of them in the shopping district and the Back Bay to confirm a visitor's impression of a quaint old town, dedicated rather to picturesque patchwork than to architectural monotony.

The city at large, to be sure, gives no such impression. For dull dinginess and smug commonplaceness hardly anything less lovely can be imagined than the shops and markets on squares, avenues and side streets of the greater part of the city proper and of jerry-built wooden suburbs radiating in a riot of three deckers and ten footers from the hub of culture, the American Athens.

If, indeed, ugliness is sin, most shopkeepers of greater Boston are wicked be-

yond redemption. Except in the quarter of quality, the narrowly delimited region which has never ceased to be inhabited or frequented by the well to do, democracy has yet to demand beauty in the marketplace. The day of the esthetic cut-rate drug-store or instalment furniture house is far off.

Little enough of the antique has been preserved. The substantial, well-proportioned Georgian shop windows, a few of which have survived in London and English provincial towns, have vanished from the polyglot parts of Boston. Newness is synonymous with rawness, except where Mammon subsidizes the artistic specialist to embody order and allure in the constructive materials of today. The banal Boston streets, nevertheless, are here and there, especially in the

neighborhood of the historic Common, relieved by the appearance of doorways and adjacent windows that conform to some or all the requirements of the good store front. The city is undergoing transformation; the local architects, and a few merchants, understand well enough the value of dignified display, of the enticing entrance.

An ideal shop front embodies the principles of good proportion and design, indicates the character both of the building itself and of the goods sold within, and conforms to the habits and customs of the public that uses the establishment. A department store with a large carriage trade needs a *porte-cochère*; such an appurtenance would be silly if applied to a 5 and 10 cent store. A frivolous *l'art nouveau* front would be unseemly for an undertaker's parlor; it might be excusable as a setting for a confectioner's dainties. At least one Victorian Gothic house of Boston has suffered from application of a Renaissance

shop front. Even a hole in the wall to be filled with plate glass should reveal to the observant that the architect conceived it as a problem in design.

The Boston business building which more notably than perhaps any other illustrates all the canons of the good shop front is the Berkeley Galleries building at Boylston and Berkeley Streets. With its frosty front of white terra cotta trimmings, enclosing wide areas of plate glass, its Gallic airiness of aspiration and the touch of frivolity in the ornamentation, this structure at first excited both titters and indignation among Back Bay folk of the sort who accept 1870 stodginess as final. The uncovered openings between beams and girders, the lace-like modeling on the thin strips encasing the steel framework, the *décolleté* appearance, in short—this was architecture that bore no observable relationship to the smugly and snugly dressed structures heretofore known to Bostonians. Naturally some people were scandalized.



RESIDENCE REMODELED IN 1880 BY THE HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY, PUBLISHERS



ONE OF THE DEEP BAYS IN THE BERKELEY GALLERIES

Yet upon the opening of Berkeley Galleries, milliners, jewelers and confectioners speedily found in it a wonderfully effective setting for their wares. It was actually designed with reference to display of the necessary luxuries that tempt all daughters of Eve—an intent revealed in the cleverly modeled serpents which have been squirmed into the grille-work over the main doorway. The prows of triremes and other nautical motives symbolize the constant procession of argosies bearing the wealth of Ormus and Ind and Dai Nippon to a fastidious few of up-to-date Boston.

The deep bays formed by the entrances, in addition to the spread of the street, give very ample show windows. Plate glass, indeed, constitutes by far the greatest part of the outer covering of the building. Yet, because each sheet

of glass is suitably and even sumptuously framed, glittering bareness is avoided. The Berkeley Galleries building, in short, is not only the most distinctive of modern Boston buildings in its acceptance of the new materials and new modes of construction; its shop fronts make the finest array.

At the other extreme from the logical and appropriate ornateness of the Berkeley Galleries is the equally appropriate unaltered front of the former residence of the younger Josiah Quincy at 4 Park Street, occupied since 1880 by the Houghton Mifflin Company, publishers. Here business has invaded the privacy of domestic Boston, but bringing no note of blatancy. The basement business offices, exposed to the outer world only through a round arched doorway and two similar windows, have an air of quiet seclusion in

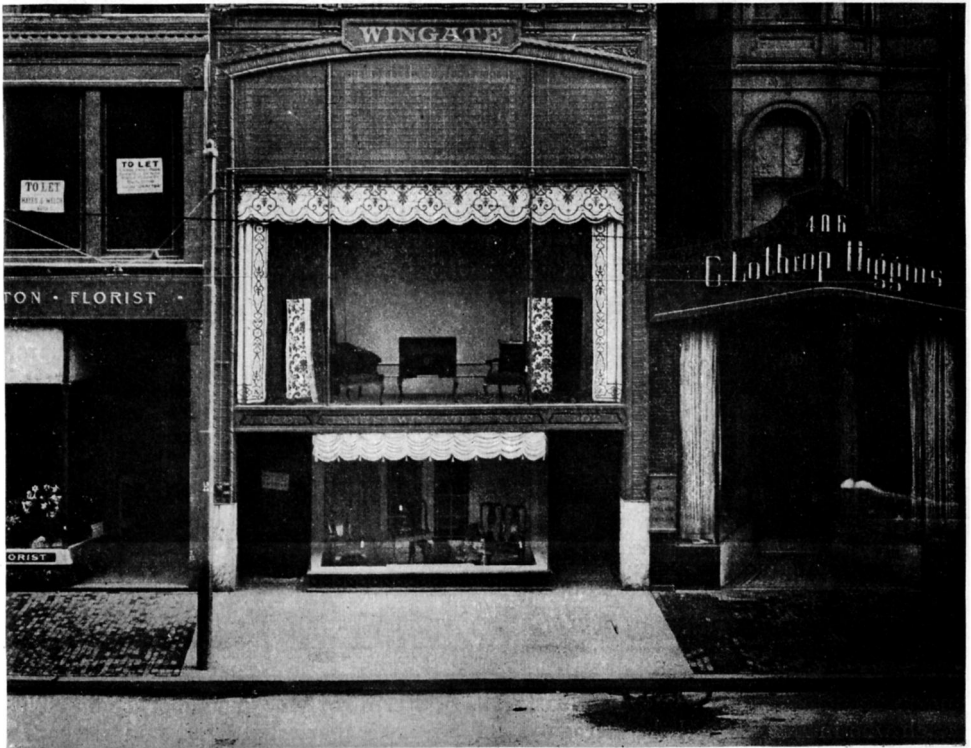
keeping with the character of a conservative publishing firm.

The fashion set by the Houghton Mifflin firm of using the remodeled private house has been followed by other Boston publishers. The text book house of Ginn & Company some time ago took the rather florid house at 29 Beacon Street on the site of John Hancock's old residence. High praise belongs to Little, Brown and Company's recent selection, at 34 Beacon Street, of a stately pink granite front, with Ionic columns set in the doorway. The new home office of L. C. Page and Company at 53 Beacon Street, adjoining the former residence of William H. Prescott, the historian, shows perfection of prettiness.

Other business besides publishing is gradually finding lodgment behind the reserved fronts of Park and Beacon Streets. The remodeled basement of 5 Park Street, where President Josiah

Quincy of Harvard College made his winter home, is devoted to Goodspeed's antique bookstore. No. 9 Park Street, greatly changed since in it George Ticknor wrote his monumental "History of Spanish Literature," shelters on its ground or basement floor, which has been extended to become flush with the street, the headquarters of the Society of Arts and Crafts and the National League of Handicraft Societies.

Bad shop fronts until very lately have been as characteristic of Tremont and Boylston Streets as of thoroughfares less favored of fashion. From the Common the skyline of the former street is grotesque; the stores below it, uncouth caves. Better building, however, is the order of the day. A large department store, of Fifth Avenue dimensions, and a Beaux Arts species of beauty, has been reared by R. H. Stearns and Company. The music publishing firm of Oliver Ditson



A TWO-STORY SHOP-FRONT TREATMENT ON BOYLSTON STREET

has cleverly worked musical symbolism into the decorations of an expansive front. At the south corner of Tremont and Winter Streets the enterprising candy house known as Liggett's has created a quaint architectural novelty in its "Dutch Chocolate Box," the lower part of the building having been remodeled to resemble a shop front of Amsterdam or Spotless Town, with small square windows, brick plinths, and recesses carrying diminutive box bushes. Almost everybody pauses a moment in front of the Dutch Box.

Artistically satisfying as the Liggett front is, the eternal girly-girly with its love of confections has nowhere been more cleverly embodied in an architectural proposition than at Page and Shaw's candy shop, 9 West Street, between Tremont and Washington. A thoroughly fantastic front it is, very saccharine in design and detail, suggesting nothing so much as a caterer's frosting of a plain three story dwelling house in a quondam residence street. Giddy-gaudy leaded glass has been introduced *passim*. There project two little metallic balconies, inset with green enamel—chocolate and pistachio, for all the world. Within the windows the outside motives are repeated in brass, enamel and mother-of-pearl. The side of the entrance opposite the show window is a solid plaque of mottled yellowish enamel, with a variegated floral border. Cloying as such a treatment might be regarded by the capacious critic, it must help to draw trade. Of other highly decorated Boston shop fronts one of the most conspicuous is Stowell's on Winter Street, an enlarged piece of *l'art nouveau* jewelry, an affair of mottled marbles, leaded glass of swirling shapes, and of greenish metal work.

Most of the stores of the shopping district on Washington, Summer and Winter Streets are architecturally commonplace, prosperous according to a provincial standard, but content to be housed dingily. Yet esthetic aspiration is beginning to be noted, even among the thrifty Scotch who in Boston hold the mercantile vantage. Only the other day when the

scaffolding came down in the vestibule at C. F. Hovey's on Summer Street, shoppers whose great grandmothers were customers of the store found themselves with sense of awed surprise in a spacious Aladdin's chamber just behind the dusty dull granite front. The floor of this vestibule is of mosaic work in red, green and white, the ceiling of bronze, with Grinling Gibbons decorative motives, a covering far removed from the atrocious stamped steel ceilings of low grade commercial establishments.

The badness of Boylston Street beyond the Public Garden is relieved in spots by amusing architectural theses, applied usually to middle-of-the-country houses which offer a moderately favorable background for the purpose. A two-story treatment of the store front tends more and more to become typical of this thoroughfare, just as it is becoming general in the fashionable parts of London. The scheme has its commercial justification in the display value of the mezzanine windows as seen from the other side of the street and from the many passing street cars.

A rather notable two-story store front of this type is Wingate's at No. 402 Boylston Street. The lower story, holding the attention of passers on the sidewalk, is not more than 10 feet high—in effect a widish slit of plate glass between symmetrical entrances, the inside setting of colonial woodwork and furniture revealing the interior decorator's business. The second story front is much the higher—virtually a great glass square, the upper third of which is a screen of prism glass. Within there is seen, from across the street, a room with cream-colored woodwork, furnished forth with Chippendale reproductions.

Creeping around Arlington Street from the corner at which everybody is struck by the effectiveness of the paintings shown in the wide second story window of Vose's art gallery, commerce is finding its way into Newbury Street without greatly disfiguring the brown-stone stateliness of the neighborhood. The new art galleries of Doll and Richards and Frank Bayley in Newbury Street

have been designed with reference to conditions in a residence district, and there is still a certain harmony between the lower and upper portions of the building on the east corner of the two streets, two of whose shops are occupied by Bunkio Matsuki, the Japanese art dealer, and Samuel B. Dean, the antiquary.

Away from the fashionable faubourg the street architecture of Boston is depressing. Unrestricted individualism has run amuck, expressing itself tawdrily. Offence to the eye is regarded as a crime by few people, even in a community where other offences are abundantly legislated against.

A NEW ETCHING BY ZORN

BY A. E. GALLATIN

A MOST representative group of 87 etchings by Anders Zorn, including a number of recent plates brought over this year by the artist, was shown during April at the galleries of Frederick Koppel & Co. in New York. Rembrandt and Whistler are certainly the undisputed masters of the etching needle. But second only to them follows this virile Swede in company with Meryon, Haden, Cameron, and one or two others.

What impressed us most of all in Zorn's vigorous paintings shown at the special display of his works at the exhibition of contemporary art at Venice in 1909, and at another collection shown a year or two before by Durand-Ruel in Paris, were the artist's brilliant and Sargent-like brush work, his improvisation and tremendous *joie de vivre*. He is a pagan intoxicated with life and reveling in color and form. His art is only coarse in the sense that this adjective might be applied to Hals, for Zorn is a great artist and a brilliant technician. As James Huneker puts it in his "Promenades of an Impressionist," that stimulating conglomeration of art criticism: "In a word, a man of robust, normal vision, a realist and an artist."

These qualities are also apparent in Zorn's etchings. In the later ones, however, such as that reproduced herewith, there is an evanescent quality, delicacy and refinement of his art not found in



THE BATHERS

ANDERS ZORN

the earlier plates. The vision of the artist is still as intensely penetrating, but the technique is infinitely more subtle than that employed in such of his plates as the masterly and searching study of Ernest Renan. Fitz Roy Carrington inquires: "Who save Zorn has ever etched a triumphantly successful nude *en plein-air*?"